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CURRENT STATE OF YUGOSLAV-SOVIET RELATIONS

Soviet Orbit policy in the Balkans during the past two months has not provided any clear indications of a reorientation of Soviet thinking on the Yugoslav problem. On 29 April Foreign Minister Molotov received the Yugoslav Charge on a visit of state for the first time since 1948. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] however, [REDACTED] the interview was devoid of any importance.

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On the propaganda front, both Soviet and Satellite attention remains at the level maintained for the past eight months, and is as vitriolic as ever, although all reference to Tito was omitted from Soviet May Day slogans. No significant alteration of Orbit pressures on the Yugoslav frontiers during the past few months has been reported by American observers, despite the Yugoslav claims that the number of incidents has doubled since the demise of Stalin.

One other possible indication of current Yugoslav relations with the Orbit will be the final result of the current Yugoslav-Rumanian talks on the administration of the Iron Gate sector of the Danube. This conference was called at the initiative of the Yugoslavs, who are anxious to regularize tariff procedures and maintenance on this difficult sector of the river by re-establishing a joint administration for the Iron Gates with the Rumanians. The Yugoslav press has given full coverage to the current meetings, but no Orbit attention has been noted.

Some observers feel that in the absence of Stalin, the assumed evil genius behind the Soviet-Yugoslav rift, a genuine attempt may be made to attract Yugoslavia back into the Orbit. An alternative hypothesis is the belief that the Soviet Union, in an effort to drive an effective wedge between Yugoslavia and the West, will slacken its economic and military pressure on Yugoslavia and in other ways foster the belief that a Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement is imminent.

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In attempting to estimate Yugoslav reaction to any Soviet offers of reconciliation, it should be kept in mind that the Soviet-Yugoslav schism resulted from a distinct clash of national interests. Soviet attempts to dominate and control Yugoslav economic development and to impose other forms of control mechanisms on the Yugoslav Government clearly demonstrated to the present leaders of Yugoslavia the pitfalls of "brotherly relations" with the Soviet Union. As recently as 6 March [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] that the Yugoslav quarrel was not with Stalin personally but with the "bureaucratic, dictatorial system," and as long as the system continued, there was no possibility of a change in the Yugoslav attitude.

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Yugoslav leaders feel that recent changes in Soviet tactics spring from the Kremlin's realization that its past policy failed to accomplish the desired results, and that the Soviet "peace offensive" does not imply that the fundamental nature of Soviet Communism has changed. They have stated publicly, however, that Yugoslavia would welcome any lessening of world tension, but would not take any Soviet overtures seriously until they were accompanied by concrete and unmistakable steps of friendship.

In sum, although Yugoslavia is not likely to reject any formal Soviet offers to normalize diplomatic relations, there is no good evidence that it would be receptive to any Soviet attempts to re-establish close economic or cultural relations or to induce Yugoslavia to abandon collaboration with the West. As for the Soviet Union, there is no indication at the present time that the Kremlin will indulge in anything more than tactics designed to undermine Yugoslav relations with the US and other NATO members and to weaken the stability of the Tito regime. It is hardly likely that the Kremlin would make an offer that might have serious repercussions throughout the Orbit, particularly with regard to China. The Kremlin must be reluctant to admit that a Communist leader could defy Moscow and be invited to return to the fold on his own terms. Pravda on 25 April emphasized the correctness of past Soviet policies and a reversal on the Tito issue would involve a serious loss of prestige without compensatory advantage.